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ABSTRACT

Written from the perspective of a participant, that is, the classroom teacher as novice supervisor, this paper presents, in case study form, a description of two cycles of clinical supervision involving teaching peers in an elementary school. The purposes of the paper are twofold. First, the paper explores, through illustrations from the case study, a number of themes germane to the doing of clinical supervision. Second, the paper demonstrates that there is more to clinical supervision than instrumental effectiveness. The improvement of practice, often espoused in the literature as the aim of any clinical supervision situation, becomes subordinate to unintended, yet ever developing and important outcomes, namely, a deeper mutual respect among participants and the enhanced self-understanding that is promoted by such a collaborative working relationship. Viewing clinical supervision as an instance of collaborative action research provides for the implications of collegial inquiry in a clinical supervision context to be more fully explored. (Author)

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TOWARD COLLEGIAL INQUIRY: IS THERE MORE TO CLINICAL SUPERVISION THAN THE IMPROVEMENT OF PRACTICE?

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Written from the perspective of a participant, that is, the classroom teacher as novice supervisor, this paper presents, in case study form, a description of two cycles of clinical supervision involving teaching peers in an elementary public school. The purposes of the paper are twofold. First, the paper explores, through illustrations from the case study, a number of themes germane to the doing of clinical supervision. Second, the paper demonstrates that there is more to clinical supervision than instrumental effectiveness. The improvement of practice, often espoused in the literature as the aim of any clinical supervision situation, becomes subordinate to unintended, yet ever-developing and important outcomes, namely, a deeper collegial respect between participants and enhanced self-understanding that is promoted by such a collaborative working relationship. Viewing clinical supervision as an instance of collaborative action research provides for the implications of collegial inquiry in a clinical supervision context to be more fully explored.

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INTRODUCTION

Written from the perspective of a participant, that is, the classroom teacher as novice supervisor, this paper presents, in case study form, a description of two cycles of clinical supervision involving teaching peers in an elementary public school.

The purposes of the paper are twofold. First, the paper explores, through illustrations from the case, a number of themes germane to the doing of clinical supervision. Second, the paper demonstrates that there is more to clinical supervision than instrumental effectiveness. The improvement of practice, often espoused in the literature as the aim of any clinical supervision situation, becomes subordinate to unintended, yet ever-developing and more important outcomes, namely, a deeper collegial respect between participants and enhanced self-understanding that is promoted by such a collaborative working relationship. While collegial learning may, indeed, be related to the improvement of practice, a case is made for collegiality in inquiry as a goal of teacher-supervisor involvement and is viewed, in this paper, as a worthwhile end in itself.

Toward Collegiality

This collegiality, however, is not be glibly construed simply as colleagues walking down the hall, arms around each others' shoulders, celebrating the fact that they are working together. Such a scenario, to be sure, does present a partially accurate picture of what collegiality entails. Collaborative inquiry, as proposed here, and the ensuing collegial relationship, are to be seen, instead, as distinct from "the social support that puts newcomers at ease" and more appropriately viewed from a less sanguine perspective, that of "the professional support that advances one's knowledge and practice of teaching" (Little, 1987, p. 498). The other part of the picture is completed by considering the notions of instrumental and personal outcomes of clinical supervision and by thinking somewhat differently about supervision and collegiality.

To do this it is beneficial to move outside the conventional understanding of clinical supervision and envisage the present teacher-supervisor relationship as an instance of collaborative

action research. Viewing clinical supervision as an instance of collaborative action research, that is, as a self-reflective, personally-meaningful, and understanding-oriented process provides a useful framework within which to begin to appreciate the efforts of the participants in the study. Such a view also suggests that analysis of collaborator efforts attending to the instrumental, that is, that focus on practical improvements, may be inappropriate. Perhaps, instead, analysis and interpretation of this particular instance of action research, a case of teacher-peer supervision, while acknowledging the importance of improving practice, ought to transcend such concerns and more fully situate the process in the achievement of personal understanding brought about by this unique working relationship.

As an Instance of Action Research

Winter (1987) would have us understand action research as a process that is "primarily a reflexive and dialectical process of critique - a process that does not eschew theory in order to improve practice but which preserves the dialectically unity of theory and practice by understanding them as mutually constitutive elements in a dynamic, developing, integrated whole" (p.). It is concerned to reveal to teachers the transient and contingent status of their practice in a way that makes it amenable to critical transformation.

Elliot (1978; 1989) transforms such an epistemology by offering a succinct summary of the characteristics of teacher-based action research. Action research investigates human actions and social situations experienced by teachers that focus on the identification, clarification, and resolutions of problems faced in realizing their educational values in practice. As a form of inquiry it is a practical/moral rather than a theoretical/technical activity. Action research involves joint reflection on means and ends and, aiming to deepen teacher understanding of problems, it adopts an exploratory stance toward any initial interpretations of the situation. Understanding does not necessarily determine appropriate action but appropriate action must be grounded in understanding.

Action research is a reflexive process. As a form of self-appraisal it is primarily a matter of the teacher evaluating the qualities of the self as they are manifested in actions. From this perspective, then, actions are to be seen as moral rather than technical practices. Self-appraisal in the context of a moral practice, Elliot contends, involves a particular type of self-reflection, namely, reflexivity. Action research integrates theory into practice in the sense that relationships are illuminated by concrete description rather than by propositions, formal

statements of causal laws, and statistical correlations. Such theories are developed by reflectively attending to practice and in this sense theory development and practical improvements are not viewed as separate processes. Finally, action research involves dialogue with professional peers in order to document changes in practice and to scrutinize the processes of deliberation and reflection through which any changes might have been brought about. Such a view, then, allows for several connections to made to clinical supervision.

Much action research assumes the form of large projects involving teams of classroom teachers coordinated by a much smaller group of faculty at a teacher education institution. Projects are planned independent of practitioners and university-based researchers maintain their role of being outsiders who study a situation. Similar observations can be made about supervision. Many initiatives in supervision take the form of projects involving numbers of classroom teachers supervised by a much smaller group of administrators in schools. Supervision is often planned independent of practitioners and the administrative supervisors maintain their role of being outsiders who evaluate a situation. In these projects research and action and supervision and action have separate functions (Lees, 1975). Perhaps, more intimately planned projects, such as the one presently described, can serve participants in ways that allow practical conclusions to emerge from such collaboration, but with neither group claiming ownership of conclusions in either domain. Action research, beginning with the practitioner, ought to be characterized by an absence of the division of labour between teachers and researchers (Elliot, 1983). Perhaps, the same is true of clinical supervision; beginning with the teacher, it, too, ought to display an absence of the division of labour between teacher and supervisor.

Often the "tremendous potential" of collaborative relationships and the "ensuing empoverment" of teachers are touted as admirable ends that, in turn, become appropriated by educational jurisdictions and translated into revamped in-service models, networking forums, or some such system-wide hybrid. In addition, many descriptions of collaboration focus on the instrumental aspects of practice with the intention of giving teachers the requisite evidence thought to lead to instrumental ends, that is, the improvement of practice. But this study, while acknowledging the importance of instrumental knowledge, suggests a case for the greater importance of deliberative reflection about educational and personal practices, and, hence, about self-appraisal as critically important in any understanding of clinical supervision.

In the ensuing case reporting, we find that practical improvements are talked about by the participants as subordinate to

understandings of personal and professional practice and relationships that emerge. These teachers view the process of clinical supervision, not from instrumental grounds that allow changes in practice, but, rather, from personal grounds that allow insights into understanding their practice.

The paper follows a method of reporting that allows for a chronological account of the supervision process within a thematic framework while, at the same time, ensuring that both teacher and supervisor are kept as central and integral to any interpretation (Coe, in press). That is, by developing the case study in this way, intermingling narrative and insight, it is possible to identify, articulate, and expand issues germane to both supervision and collegiality as they are encountered and take shape.

An initial section of the paper describes the study site and provides information about the participants and the social contexts. The second and third sections of the paper attend to events, issues, and analysis resulting from the two cycles of clinical supervision. In a fourth section of the paper recurring themes in clinical supervision are examined and contribute to a re-thinking of clinical supervision. A final section of the paper offers a summary view of collegial inquiry and reiterates the claim that clinical supervision, rather than offering improvements in practice, may, in fact, offer insights into innovative aspects of collaborative peer relationships.

PERSPECTIVES

A Backdrop of Isolation

Isolation has long been recognized as a fact of teaching life. Research on the teaching profession and school organization reveals that teachers in most schools are physically isolated from one another (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz & Kyle, 1984) and that this isolation constrains opportunities for collegial interaction and learning to occur. The combination of the self-contained classroom and a heavy teaching schedule gives teachers few opportunities to share common problems or to sustain an intellectual life. As Little (1987) observes, teachers are colleagues in name only, working out of sight and hearing of one another, preparing lessons alone, and struggling to understand practice on their own.

The following quotations from two teachers recently involved in the process of clinical supervision, exemplify quite clearly that most teachers are only too aware of this situation:

> But it has the potential among peers to establish a kind of relationship where people become quite open with what it is they do. Think about our business,..we're isolated...we're all on little islands. I have no idea what Ethel does; Ethel has no idea what I do. No one has any idea of what we do, we have no mark against which to assess our performance...
>
> and:
>
> There's people who have worked for twenty years in this school, side by side, aside from going down to the staffroom...still really don't understand how each other...what we think or how we do things.

Smyth (1984) comments that, because of the way schools are organized, there is often little opportunity for teachers to interact constructively with peers, about teaching. Similarly, Goodlad (1984) describes how positive, adult relationships can be difficult to find in schools and asserts that the classroom cells in which teachers spend so much of their time appear to be symbolic and predictive of their relative isolation not only from one another but also from sources of ideas beyond their own background of experience. Barth (1984) postulates three ways that teachers might interact. Two of them, rather than being cooperative behaviours that serve a mutual purpose, are instead antagonistic behaviours that distance professionals from one another; there are adversarial relationships where individuals avoid contact and there are competitive relationships where insights and information are withheld. A third postulate, however, and one that is useful to the present inquiry, is an interactive relationship, that of collegiality.

Clinical supervision is meant to imply supervision up close (Goldhammer, 1969) and has as its focus the improvement of the teacher's classroom instruction (Cogan, 1973). Smyth (1984) identifies a belief in the importance, dignity and worth of the individual teacher as the underlying presumption of clinical supervision. He emphasizes the importance of teachers working collaboratively with colleagues to pursue the many particular issues related to teaching practice. Goldhammer (1969) intends that, throughout the process of clinical supervision, an emphasis on guided reflection designed to assist teachers to acquire meaning and understanding from their teaching, be integral to the interactive encounter between two colleagues. As a result, practices and values can become enhanced rather than replaced.

Not only do classroom situations impinge directly on teachers but

the structure of schools also shapes what and how teachers do and think about their work. The cellular structure of schools seems to suggest norms of non-interference among teachers. Individualism and non-interference are thus manifested in ways of thinking about teacher work that characterize classrooms as inviolate, teachers advising others only when consulted, autonomy as both desirable and inevitable, and coping with problems alone as acceptable and appropriate practice (Lortie, 1975; Jackson, 1968; Little, 1987). Despite the amount of time that teachers spend with children, opportunities for professional sharing with other adults is distressingly scarce. Working together, then, toward professional development that results in an enhanced understanding of practice, can be a source of both support and insight.

It is against this backdrop of isolation and from a perspective that examines the possibilities of collegiality, that the present case study of clinical supervision is to be viewed. The following is an account of two cycles of clinical supervision involving teaching peers at Front Street Elementary School.

Front Street School and the Participants

Front Street School is an inner city school and one of a half-dozen or so schools that have been given compensatory funds for such social services as breakfast programs, home-school liaison workers, parenting courses, and clothing exchanges. It is a large school, having been added to over a number of years, covering the better part of a city block. That it is a one story building means that some classrooms are quite remote from others. The school has a large population and is host to a number of special programs. Facilities and resources are, thus, used to more than full advantage.

The class involved in this clinical supervision project is a Primary, Year Three and Four group of twenty-five students. Differing levels of abilities are evident among this class of eight to ten year olds. The classroom is one in which integration with both materials and peers is encouraged. There are interesting things for children to do and the environment offers lots of opportunities for them to manage things for themselves. Children's work is much in evidence. Language experience chart stories hang from a clothesline; art work and craft constructions line the walls and windowsills; topical stories are on display. Areas that the teacher has arranged offer a wide variety of activities that children can do and talk about. The noise level is high, compared to adjacent classrooms, as children are engaged in both group and

individual lessons. The room appears to be child-oriented and a place where language is valued.

The teacher with whom the present clinical supervision was conducted is Alan M. Alan is in his eighth year of teaching, having taught all subjects in the elementary curriculum to children aged seven to eleven years. The classroom environment that Alan maintains very much reflects his dedication to the teaching profession and a commitment to the children with whom he works.

Alan and I had known each other as teaching peers for nearly three years, but aside from participating in divisional planning, had not worked in as intimate a fashion as this project provided. Initial contact to commence the first of the two cycles of clinical supervision began February 6 and ended some eight weeks later, much later than was anticipated, on April 3. The day to day realities and constraints of teaching was a factor that did impose some practical limits on our progress and adds credence to Kilbourn's (1982) notion of continuity as an integral element in clinical supervision. There were only four twenty minute periods per week when Alan and I could meet to plan or evaluate what it was we were doing, and only two forty minute periods per week available to use as observation. Add to these timetable restrictions the usual and frequent daily responsibilities and minor crises that occur in schools and these available times often evaporated.

CLINICAL SUPERVISION

Cycle One: Events and Interpretations

In an initial, albeit brief, encounter with Alan I discussed the possibility of working with him in a clinical supervision partnership. This was not the easy task that one might expect and I found that my explanations of what I considered to be a rather complicated process were made more difficult by the fact that I was just coming to terms with the novel aspects of what it was that I was attempting to explain. It is true, as Kilbourn (1982) observes, that there is some degree of confusion as to what clinical supervision entails and that the term itself brings to mind ambiguous and not always pleasant associations. As Alan comments, before any observations had taken place:

> I would personally feel a little uptight to think there's somebody...going to rhyme off this grand list of mistakes and things I could improve afterwards; I mean the kind of thing that we went through with practice teaching and the stuff that we put student teachers through.

The fact that the meeting occurred in the hall during the last five minutes of morning recess precluded discussion at too great a length. In the meantime, I shared several articles about supervision with Alan and planned to make these the basis of our first planning session.

It is important to appreciate that a teacher's decision to participate in a supervision relationship is not to be taken lightly. Anytime a person enters a classroom to observe, the normal teacher-child interactions are disrupted and the teacher is similarly relinquishing some autonomy. Trust in the teacher-supervisor relationship becomes a critical factor; a willingness to look critically at classroom practice involves self-exposure and vulnerability (Rich, 1984). Alan's comment illustrates this point:

> That sort of experience...(somebody in there watching every little mistake I made)...I would find a little threatening, but in reading this stuff and from what you had to say initially, it's obvious to me that it's not so much a critique of my teaching as an opportunity for you to watch and help.

A considerable portion of our first conference was devoted to arriving at a mutual understanding of just what clinical supervision was all about and, in particular, speculating as to the nature of the working relationship that we were about to enter. Alan appeared to he very positive about the opportunity and indicated that he found the articles that I had previously given him to read to be quite beneficial in coming to terms with the notion of clinical supervision. He states his understanding of the whole process rather succinctly:

> I'll be asking you to watch a couple of things that I'm interested to know about what I'm doing, because I can't he objective in the middle of the situation and so you can take notes and watch and help me out that way. Afterwards, and also by watching someone else, you'll collect ideas that might be of some use to you and so it will be an interchange process rather than the evaluative one.

Alan had given obvious thought to areas where my observation might be of benefit and had identified a line of inquiry that would examine his use of language. In particular, he wanted to knov hov much language he used in class that was of comparative nature. After some discussion the question was clarified to address:

> Not just the working of it, but the use of questioning in terms of drawing comparisons and...maybe creating feelings of inferiority and superiority by how I organize who I question, in what order and whose responses are put up against who else's.

At the pre-observation conference, Alan and I agreed on three types of data collection that might help us understand his use of questioning and whether or not certain aspects of it communicated anything of a comparative value that he might place upon pupils' responses. A taped transcript would provide stable data indicating question and response content, while a diagram of questions would show to whom, and with what frequency, questions were directed. In preparation for the observation session, I devised what I considered to be an elaborate checklist that would suffice for the bulk of the observable data. However, in the actual session, it soon proved to have several uninformative columns that were quickly ignored. It became streamlined and efficient in use within a matter of minutes, providing support for Goldhammer's (1969) advice about fewness and treatability with respect to data. At the conclusion of the pre-observation conference, when asked if our plans seemed clear enough, Alan responds with a typical, but rather telling understatement: "That's a good bite sized chunk to start off with".

Inherent in any discussions of clinical supervision seem to be opposed notions of the instrumental and the personal nature of teaching. It is curious to note that, while clinical supervision operates within the paradigm of teaching as a personal endeavour, it nevertheless is expected to result in improvements in teaching that can be characterized as practical and instrumental. But, the questions proposed by Alan seemed somewhat complex and indicated a tendency toward seeing the personal or reflective as opposed to the instrumental ends of the clinical supervision process. Listening to Alan speak about the areas for possible observation and suitability of data collection methods led me to think that he was already reflecting on possibilities. Reflection, in the context of clinical supervision, may be powerful in that it blends well the personal and the instrumental.

For my observation Alan chose a lesson in which there would be lots of talking and questioning as children discussed a current classroom theme, "Creative Canadians" and recorded ideas on chart paper in order to develop a list of words and ideas that would form the basis of spelling, writing, and other language activities over the next few days. Alan explains his choice:

> I purposely chose the brainstorm exercise, the word list type of exercise, because there really shouldn't be too many wrong answers in a sense...I was curious to see how,

> in print, I handled children whose ideas...were maybe a little inappropriate...and how I made them feel in my response to their answer.

I observed in the classroom for about thirty minutes. While the lesson that Alan chose to teach was a typical activity, my presence in the room was obviously not. Robinson's (1984) concern over the unsettling effect of a supervisor's presence in the classroom is echoed by Alan:

> I would say it (the lesson) was probably fairly typical; but not typical in the sense that I was a little uptight, a little unusual for me to have somebody watching and I was sensitive to that; I was unable to block out the fact that you were in there and its obvious on the tape cause I refer to you a couple of times and even when it doesn't appear on the tape I can remember looking back and thinking...how does this sound?

And the lingering legacy of traditional supervision, in which a superior enters, oversees and evaluates, is underscored by Alan's further explanation of lesson choice:

> I sort of wanted us to be doing something with large group, I don't know why, I just thought, maybe this is an old prejudice that this is teaching; when the observer comes in you gotta be teaching the crowd, the whole group.

During the post observation conference Alan and I found it useful to return to issues we had identified earlier. While a good deal of our discussion centred on those issues, Alan expressed mild surprise at some idiosyncrasies that the transcript had illuminated for him:

> We were speaking the other day in passing about the difference between verbal language and written language and I know how I write, but its a real revelation to see how you speak down on paper; this is the first time this has ever happened to me and it's a good thing because it makes me much more aware of what I'm saying.

and:

> I enjoyed looking through this because, its kind of like trying to return to the scene of the crime, but I was really amazed at how many questions were not directed at people in particular.

The recording schedule and the diagrammatic record of teacher questions and frequency were examined to determine the extent to which these data might be useful. The discussion seemed to remain at a superficial and general level and it was not until the observation transcript was examined more closely and a list of teacher questions that were part of the observed lesson was drawn up from it, that we felt we were pursuing a more valuable line of inquiry. My query to Alan:

> Just before we go, do you think that what we've collected in any way comes to answering the question you asked originally?

and his subsequent reply:

> It's a beginning...I think this is going to be even better, these other things that you're adding on, isolating the questions, looking at them a little more closely and the order as well.

indicate both the necessity of more detailed analysis and the benefit of mutual inquiry, and support Schon's (1983) notion that a successful reframing of a situation leads to a continuation of the reflective conversation. Although there were clues to unpacking some of the questions Alan had raised, the data seemed to suggest that other avenues of inquiry or perspectives might prove to be equally valuable. One example is noteworthy:

While Alan wished to know something about the comparative nature of his questioning, it seemed that our data collection and subsequent examination of the order, direction, and sequence of his questions did not help as much with our understanding as would have an analysis of the kinds of questions that were asked and the way in which responses were treated. To assist with our continuing analysis of the transcript I suggested to Alan that we examine the quality of his questions using Tough's (1979) taxonomy of dialogue strategies as a framework within which to judge the part played in dialogue by teacher talk. Briefly the taxonomy classifies teacher dialogue strategies as follows: orienting, enabling, informing, sustaining, and concluding. Examining dialogue in this way, I thought, might help us to understand how strategies could be selected in order to help the child to think and to express that thinking in language.

As a result of this examination of teacher questions, some discussion arose that addressed the patterns that were apparent in Alan's dialogue and some characteristics of his questions were isolated; I report to him:

> What I found about your questions was they weren't specific questions; a lot of them are implied questions, in raising the voice or a word that gave a cue...or a little bit of a question, then some dialogue, then rounded off again. ...And for the most part, I thought your questions took the form of: a teacher question, a pupil response, and then a teacher explanation; then, you moved on to the next one.

I proposed several possible teacher exchange models in an attempt to accommodate the kinds of question patterns that I had observed. From the transcripts I selected examples of Alan's questioning that contributed to the development of the models. It is interesting to note that after each example, Alan rationalizes, offering possible explanations as to why the question patterns appear as they do. While data analysis should be a cooperative venture, it may be that Alan's perceptions were more astute than mine since he was intimate with both his pupils and his intentions.

That I considered making suggestions to Alan brought the issue of autonomy to prominence for me. After all, as Smyth (1984) notes, it is important that not only the impetus for focus come from the teacher, but also that the teacher may be the only person able to indicate why the lesson took the direction it did at a particular moment. I speculated that my data gathering techniques were inadequate to answer Alan's questions; such speculation, then, led me to reflect upon an alternative framework within which to view the problem. As it happened, the Tough (1979) taxonomy became unnecessary; Alan very clearly articulated his own rational, personal, and equally valuable taxonomy to accommodate his questions as he examined the transcripts. His insightful analysis follows:

> Inside that next paragraph...this is an invitation to respond...the Kelly exchange...one was content, the other three were volume, clarification...I guess what I'm doing there in is asking permission...interesting to see the differences in purposes of some of these questions, some of them are strictly...tell me what to write down and others are...someone's given an answer and I'm @asking is it O.K. to change your answer a little bit...some are clarification... this one is a permission thing...that whole section there is trying to redirect Marcie...This one is asking everybody, trying to get back on track... yes, there's another acknowledging, not accepting, there's another permission thing.

Looking ahead to the second cycle of supervision, Alan concludes our first post observation conference with a possible lesson plan alternative:

> This is the model that's almost prescribed by the use of a chart situation (linear)...but I can see this one (interactive) working beautifully in a situation...more of a human growth lesson or a lot of our discussions that come out of Bible stories.

Cycle Two: Events and Interpretations

Several days following the conclusion of cycle one Alan and I met to begin planning for a second observation. Speaking of a practitioner's attempts to solve a problem, Schon (1983) comments that a situation comes to be understood through the attempt to change it and changed through the attempt to understand it. At the conclusion of cycle one I felt that we had not completely answered Alan's original questions about the extent to which he used comparative language when answering children's questions or in class discussions. Yet, while we may not have directly answered the questions, we had, nevertheless, resolved their importance; that we had satisfactorily resolved the original focus is confirmed by Alan's response:

> Not really. I think it has helped me see how different tasks are in terms of the nature of questioning that you do and this particular task that I chose (first time) didn't really show a whole lot of that.

But, more importantly, Alan claims that the question is no longer so relevant:

> I'm not sure the concern didn't come so much from my own questions and thinking about the way I ask questions as from my educational biases and what I feel is an appropriate way to handle children and their responses.

The substance of the first cycle became the reference points for discussion during the pre-observation conference for the second cycle. Alan seemed to have given some thought to possible changes during the time that had elapsed between cycles. It was reassuring to feel that his involvement in the clinical supervision relationship went beyond our actual time together.

We had talked at some length in the earlier cycle about the dialogue patterns that seemed to be evident as Alan interacted with his students. While we attributed the patterns mainly to the type of lesson taught, we, nevertheless, both felt that new dimensions

could be incorporated into class discussions in order to make the dialogue more effective. I made a suggestion. For example, while Alan, for the most part, accepted and appreciated each child's contribution or response, there were many times when a response of his such as, "exactly" or "that's right" or "absolutely", intended to acknowledge and facilitate, actually concluded a conversation and did not allow others to become part of the action. As I observe:

> I thought those were characteristics of what might be considered very positive responses to questions but at the same time would not allow anyone else to get into the conversation. Now, if this is your basic pattern of dialogue (linear model), an alternative to this might be (interactive model). Suppose you asked a question and you got a pupil response and instead of saying something you went to another pupil and then you went to a teacher explanation or some kind of summary or allowed an exchange that way?

In order to see teacher exchanges that might reflect different dialogue patterns, Alan suggests that I observe a different sort of lesson:

> In fact, what we'll do next time is save our daily Bible story discussion; there's a good ten to fifteen minutes of discussion there...I think it might bring out more of an invitation to think divergently, rather than convergently, more of a welcoming response, without that comparing aspect...no judgemental aspect to their responses.

The content and possible dynamics of the lesson to be observed were discussed. At this point, it is worth noting that a question has not been set, yet we have proposed several significant changes. In comparison to cycle one, in which the lesson and data were derived from the question, the question is now almost an afterthought. I ask:

> What kind of question can we set now in the context of the changes we have made? You've changed the seating format, the lesson plan format; we're moving from a convergent thinking task to a divergent one.

It is as if we have a tacit understanding that the question from cycle one still lingers and begs to be answered. That solution however, seems to be dependent on the resolution of a number of lesser issues that have now been generated as a result of our mutual efforts in the first cycle. The practitioner has, as Schon (1983) observes, an interest in transforming the situation from what it is

to something he likes better, and, as a result, the unique situation at hand then becomes the domain of inquiry. Alan's many interests now include:

> I'd like to know how often I use questioning as a tool for grabbing someone's attention...
>
> and:
>
> ...I suspect there will be eight to ten people at the most involved in any (class) discussion...
>
> and:
>
> I'd like to know if I'm asking sort of prescriptive questions or open ended questions. What kind of balance.
>
> and:
>
> If I'm asking a question that could have many answers, but I have an answer that I find most appropriate, do I keep going until I get the answer and then stop or do I keep going?

We agreed, as we did in cycle one, on suitable data collection methods that might help us out with these issues. Again, a taped transcript would provide data about question and response content while a diagram of teacher interactions would show to whom and with what frequency questions were directed. A checklist would verify frequency and provide information to help determine the potential value of the teacher talk models. I observed in the classroom for about thirty minutes. Alan was quite pleased with the way that the lesson had gone, but still voiced some unease about my presence in the room, although not to the extent that it was expressed in the first cycle:

> This time around, reading over the transcript, I was pretty pleased. I think on the whole I did a fair job of that but I think, though, I was also ultra-sensitive to it because you were in the room and that's what we were looking for.

During the second post-observation conference, Alan's initial comments focus on the original question from the first cycle, confirming my suspicion that it remained an important, but not always articulated focus. I refer to a section of the pre-observation transcript from cycle two:

> It seems to me, that whole section, what you're giving

me here is a bit of your background philosophy and it seems that if you are thinking about that and can articulate that, that you are aware of whether you ask comparative questions or not. I mean, I think you've been aware of it for a while, but you probably haven't thought about it.

In our continuing discussion, Alan began to see that there were some discrepancies between what he thought and did and what he did in practice. These he finds disturbing and attributes his inability to detect that while teaching to the complexity of the classroom experience:

> When the chips are down and things are flying and you're in the middle of something... I was wondering how much my response to the reality of working with the kids really jived with what I would like to be doing...in other words, do I compromise what I know I would like to avoid.

For teachers, the process of teaching requires intense attention to the moment by moment development of the lesson and usually precludes the possibility of simultaneously stepping back to analyze events. Such analysis then, as Mayher and Brause (1985) observe, must be deferred to the time when the teacher may focus exclusively on the lesson. In this reflective mode teachers can begin to inquire about their influence on student learning, thereby learning from their teaching. Learning in such a recursive way often frustrates with its elusiveness.

Again, as in cycle one, the transcript reveals, for Alan, aspects of his behaviour of which he was unaware. For example, during the first cycle, Alan stated that he felt he interacted to a greater extent with children who "needed to be brought along" than he did with those "who had things well established". Reading the transcript, he finds that not to be the case and observes:

> I don't. I really don't. I don't bring them along. That's a little disturbing to me and a good thing to know, and something that I wouldn't have known otherwise. I had this impression that I was leaving kids who had lots to say sitting cold while I dragged it out of others, yet that's not borne out at all in the numbers.

The recording schedule and the record of teacher interactions and frequency were examined to determine the extent to which the data might be useful. For me, the inadequacy of data without explanation and the realization that Alan, as the teacher, was the most important agent of analysis, are made very clear when I reported to Alan that I had found very few examples of questioning

used for attention purposes, he quickly corrected me saying:

> I read through the transcript and saw those situations coming up...You can't see the line when you're reading the transcript because you can't see the expression on the faces, you can't see what the child is doing.

Even a few minutes in any classroom can illustrate how complex every classroom is and how difficult it really is then to understand events solely on the basis of what can be observed. The value of so much of what happens in a classroom cannot be determined without reference to trying to understand why; observation alone can never be a sufficient guide to understanding.

Some differences in the quality of questions and instances of dialogue were noted; more examples of effective interchanges were examined. The kinds of questions that Alan asked during the second observation lesson more closely and more frequently resembled an interactive model that we discussed earlier. The original issue, concerning dialogue used in a comparative manner became, once again, the perspective from which to view these new observations. I elaborate:

> Do you remember the little models I made up...the linear model...and we looked at the other one? I think what I see in your questions is - teacher question, a response, another pupil response,1 another pupil response and then you tie it together - either with a question or an elaboration. So there is more checking out and if we relate that back to the comparative things, it's not an answer and a termination.

Alan has also, through the practice of asking several related questions together, opened up the possibility of several answers to be potentially acceptable, enabling a variety of responses to be correct. He answers his own query about the advisability of asking a group of questions together sensitive, again, to the integrity and feelings of the child:

> So you're faced then with the question...you can't say yes or no. Whereas if you've just thrown a shotgun blast of questions out, sort of all around the general concept...yeah, you're right, they don't have to be thinking exactly on your track as long as they're in the general vicinity.

I concluded this post observation conference with Alan by thanking him for his participation:

> Well, Alan, I really appreciate you spending all this time, honest... we've worked together for three years, but we've never sat down and worked together.

What the preceding accounts illustrate is that our partnership in the clinical supervision process provided us with a working relationship that neither of us may have realized we were missing. Our commitment, albeit brief, to help each other view our professional lives as learning, may have given us insights into a new kind of peer relationship. Alan concludes our conference in typical understatement:

> I don't know, I just never really considered the complexity of it when I asked that question in the first place...and that's what's been good about this whole thing. Now, this particular small area of teaching that we've examined, I feel like I have a better idea of what I'm doing and really what I'm doing, not just what I think I'm doing. It's kind of been helpful that way.

RE-THINKING CLINICAL SUPERVISION

To this point the discussion has followed a chronological account that has, by intermingling narrative and interpretive insight from both teacher and supervisor, allowed issues to be identified and described as they were encountered. However, there are some recurring themes about clinical supervision and collegiality that surfaced during the course of the study that warrant further attention and expansion. Discussion of these recurring themes helps to move in the direction of thinking about clinical supervision as an instance of collaborative action research and allows an expanded view of supervision to be advanced.

Some Mutual Hesitation

McCoombe (1981) notes a reluctance on the part of the teacher to be observed. While Alan did not hesitate to cooperate in our mutual exploration, he did, as the transcripts show, express continued unease at my presence in the classroom. What the protocols do not show, however, is a similar sensitivity on my part in assuming the role of supervisor. I recall reflecting in my fieldnotes on an early occasion that I felt somewhat pressured to perform to Alan's expectations as the supervising partner and in a later entry I wondered if I was not putting to much pressure on him. Because of

time constraints and so on, Alan found it difficult to assimilate data and excerpts from readings that I had given him. In his journal, while clinical supervision is in progress he states his reservations:

> Initially it sounded like a great idea...the volume of paper - articles to read in preparation, transcripts upon transcripts seem prohibitive...great deal of time and effort to maintain objectivity - maybe its worth it!

The supervisor's credibility is enhanced if that person currently teaches and is, in some way, intimate with the class to be observed. That I was a teaching peer, a primary teacher as Alan was, and that I had previously taught many of the students in his class, enabled me to offer observations and insights with confidence. In particular, I was pleased that the observable data were appreciated. As Alan comments: "The tape was interesting but seeing the number maps and groupings of question types was where the real value lay".

It is noteworthy that, as a novice supervisor, I carefully worded my descriptions of aspects of clinical supervision to Alan. In talking about what we had already done or were about to do, I attempted to avoid bias or indicate suggestions, coercion, or moving him in a particular direction. It seemed to me that to <u>do</u> clinical supervision <u>to</u> someone or to <u>suggest that</u> implied a presupposed need to improve or change and was tied somewhat to the image of viewing teaching as an instrumental rather than reflective act. This caution, then, indicates the extent to which the notions of objectivity and autonomy must be valued and appreciated. While I'm sure that at the outset of our working relationship we were sensitive to making value judgements about the observed teaching, this may have been an unnecessary caution. There is no evidence in the transcripts where evaluative language is used by either Alan or I. It is, in a sense, a non-issue, attributable perhaps to the fact that both Alan and I are experienced teachers who know each other.

<u>Experience Counts</u>

Experienced and novice teachers and supervisors may handle clinical supervision differently. That the process of clinical supervision moves in somewhat different directions when a novice teacher is part of the relationship is clearly illustrated by Kilbourn (1982). Originally, the questions posed by Alan seemed somewhat complex and indicated to me a predilection toward seeing the reflective or intellectual as opposed to the instrumental ends of the process. I speculated that this apparent complexity was due to the fact that Alan was an experienced teacher and that he had

already sorted away many of the pragmatic issues of practice.

Application of the concept of development to the study of progressive changes thought to occur in teachers throughout their careers seems legitimate in this case. The basic assumption underlying this line of inquiry is that no person can begin the job as a veteran. The body of literature on teacher development to date suggests that the characteristics of teachers that appear to change with experience include concerns and understandings (Katz, 1985).

An approach to teacher development, elaborated primarily by practitioners, and one that seems most consistent with the tenets of clinical supervision, is characterized by in-service work that is informed by a view of professional learning that is internally generated. Such an approach emphasizes response to teachers' own definitions of their learning needs, the establishment of structures of support for teachers to pursue their own directions of growth, and extension based on teachers' motivation to take curricular responsibility. In this context, teacher development is often described in terms of stages, culminating in teachers who are both willing and able to take responsibility for curricular decision making (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986).

Katz (1985) offers a framework of four stages, each accompanied by developmental tasks and learning requiring particular kinds of in-service support, that seems well-suited to provide a lens through which to view any attempts at teacher supervision. Katz's (1985) third stage, renewal, is marked by that point in the teacher's career when the teacher is prompted to look for ways of learning new methods, approaches, and ideas, and of renewing an enthusiasm for and commitment to teaching. Visits to other classrooms, workshop participation, conference attendance, and a willingness to engage in dialogue with peers characterize this stage. At the same time, teachers become interested in participating in and learning more about their own teaching concerns. By the fourth stage, maturity, teachers are asking deeper and more complex questions about the nature of their work and of education in a broader sense. Recognizing their special strengths and limitations, teachers have developed habits and strategies for self-renewal, and, hence, self-understanding.

Such a developmental view is clearly illustrated by the present case study of supervision. The actions of Alan and peer supervisor suggest a number of ways that teachers can enhance their own learning and, therefore, understand their practice. First, the adoption of a developmental view of themselves allows teachers to assess their current competence; accepting oneself as a developing professional allows teachers to become students of their own teaching. Second, studying one's teaching provides for the

development of strategies and procedures for self-reneval. Third, a developmental view of teachers and colleagues legitimizes the notion of being in progress and calls for the sharing of experience and insight as a major aspect of professional maturity. Perhaps, clinical supervision should be seen in such a conceptualization of teaching and understanding.

Much of Alan's conversation throughout the two cycles reveals that he is capable of assessing his own competence in terms of where he has been and where he wants to go next. He accepts himself as a developing professional. That he, too, is learning through his own teaching, and allowing this learning to be in a state of progress is indicated by comments in his journal:

> I was also interested and happy to learn that...I have been doing this without really being aware of it. The goal of discovering some new aspects of the way that one teaches and discussing ways, means and implications of changing is good.

If the teacher is viewed from a developmental perspective, then it is incumbent upon the supervisor to not only acknowledge that learning is in progress but also to provide support, encouragement, and information at appropriate times during the process of clinical supervision. If sharing of experience and insight is a major aspect of professional maturity, then perhaps the success of this particular case is to some degree a function of mutual inquiry by two experienced peers.

Questions Reflect Personal Philosophy

While the notion of experience provides some insight into the complex nature of the original question posed by Alan, it does not fully explain it. There may be other considerations. Alan teaches in a vibrant primary classroom where interaction with both materials and peers is encouraged.. The room is rich in interchanges and alive with movement. How children do things is often more valued than what the children produce. That Alan raised complex issues initially may in some way reflect the importance of an orientation to process in primary education as opposed to product.

More important to understanding the nature of the questions for the focus of observations may be the possession of a personal philosophy of education. Alan's work with children is guided by strong and articulated principles of education that provide a firm grounding for his inquiry. Throughout discussions during the two cycles, comments such as the following are not uncommon:

> I think we have a bias away from competition and comparing individuals in the education system; that is a destructive tendency that has been present a long time and anything I can do to avoid comparing kids with each other, and creating a competitive atmosphere in the classroom, I feel positive if I can avoid that sort of thing. So I was concerned about...I'm not sure the concern didn't come so much from my own questions and thinking about the way I ask questions, more so from my educational biases and what I feel is an appropriate way to handle children and their responses to things.

Working Relationships

The process of clinical supervision seems to be most effective when there is a good working relationship between the teacher and supervisor and can result in deepened personal respect for each other as professionals. The benefits of clinical supervision, however, may not reside solely in self-improvement or improvement of practice or improvement in student achievement. These may be merely artifact, while the lasting outcome of the process may be simply the resulting collegial respect that is engendered among teachers. This is perhaps all to rare a commodity in teaching at present. Interestingly, this observation is echoed by Alan in his journal when he states: "The main value (of clinical supervision) is the interchange between two professionals who know and respect each other".

A recurring theme in much of the discourse about clinical supervision is an attention to the improvement of practice; such discourse is framed by particular conceptions of how good teaching ought to operate. That is, although clinical supervision originates in the adoption of a stance in which action intended to change the situation is temporarily suspended until a deeper understanding of the practical problem has been achieved, more often than not, feedback discussions between collaborators result in the setting of either explicit or implicit standards to be reached. The subsequent practice is then essentially appraised in terms of its instrumental effectiveness in achieving the predetermined standards. Potential difficulties arise when teachers and their supervisor collaborators, with the best of intentions, focus on attainment of the already discussed ends to the exclusion of explorations into other aspects of classroom practice. At the same time, such focusing may encourage the participants to regard the process as a simple

technical enterprise rather than a complex process whose specific elements need to be considered in the light of the whole. Elliot (1989) cautions that "focusing attention continuously on a few targets is a good recipe for ensuring that the teacher is unable to "see the wood for the trees" (pp. 18-19). Construing clinical supervision, then, as a technical activity points to judgements of instrumental effectiveness that are grounded in factual evidence about the extent to which actions achieve predetermined ends. An instrumental, rather than reflective, view of practice is reinforced.

And such views mitigate against self-appraisal or self-reflection. The qualitative dimension of teaching, as manifested in action rather than results, assumes importance when supervision is seen in other than technical terms. In a view of teaching as a personal moral practice, appraisals of teaching are not viewed simply as judgements of instrumental effectiveness, but, instead, place the technical dimension in a broader context of educational values. Collaborative courses of action become, then, not just critiques of performance, but, critiques of the professional self. Clinical supervision might be best seen, then, as connected with understanding of the self rather than mastery of techniques.

SUMMARY

Typically teachers work in isolation; there are relatively few classroom situations that allow for team-teaching opportunities. At the same time, there seems to be a prevalent feeling among teachers that asking for help is seen as an indicator of failure; similarly, suggesting a change in practice to a teaching peer is discouraged. While accounts of teachers working in isolation, where instructional practices are seldom discussed, are frequent in the literature, not all schools present such pictures. Little (1982) describes schools that are organized to promote colleagueship and interaction of a substantial sort; teachers observe each others' teaching, provide feedback and improvements, and discuss professional problems. Teachers may, in fact, have distressingly few opportunities for professional sharing so that working together toward professional development that results in an understanding of practice can be a source of both support and insight.

Viewing clinical supervision as an instance of collaborative action research, that is, as a self-reflective, personally-meaningful, and understanding-oriented process provides a useful framework within which to begin to appreciate the efforts of the participants in the study. Such a view also suggests that analysis attending to the instrumental is inappropriate. Perhaps,

instead, analysis and interpretation of this particular instance of action research, a case of teacher-peer supervision, while acknowledging the importance of improving practice ought to transcend such concerns and more fully situate the process in the achievement of personal understanding brought about by this unique working relationship.

The present case study is important for several reasons. First, this paper examines the possibilities and limits of collegiality between two teachers and provides a detailed account of the clinical supervision process. Such detailed accounts are frequently lacking in discussions of supervision and understanding of practice. Second, the paper presents an important insider's view of working with peer supervision, that is, from the perspective of classroom teacher as novice supervisor. Such a vantage point allows for observations and interpretations about supervision to be grounded in actual practice. Third, the position taken in this paper is important since it attempts to offer an alternate view of clinical supervision, namely, one that sees improvement of practice as subordinate to the development of collegial respect and enhanced self-understanding. Such a conceptualization of clinical supervision allows for an expanded and more productive interpretation of the process.

Classroom teachers are in the best position to ask questions, to accumulate data, and to take up teaching directions based on patterns that emerge, but it may take time for them to realize this potential advantage for their practice and time to gain the confidence to develop this potential. Cultural support is seen as crucial to sustain teacher inquiry and collaborative projects, such as the one just described, may be small, but, nevertheless, significant steps in the direction of such support.

That teachers are constantly in the process of investigating by reflecting on their experiences, is echoed by James Britton (1983) when he states:

> In the course of interaction with individuals and classes, a teacher must make a hundred and one decisions that can only reliably come from inner conviction, that is to say by consistently applying an every developing rationale. This requires that every lesson should be for the teacher an inquiry, some further discovery, a quiet form of research, and that time to reflect, drav inferences, and plan further inquiry is essential. (pp. 90)

Wells (1985) advises learners, at all levels, to realize that after all, learning is about becoming one's own expert. More than

just a means to an end, it is a philosophy and a strategy to effect change. Classroom teachers, as learners, continually ask questions about the effects of their practices on student learning. If cooperative working relationships among peers can be developed to share the burden of thinking about these issues, then support can be provided to initiate inquiry, to clarify information, to frame important questions and to expand practice. Wisdom that offers insight into a new kind of collaborative peer relationship, such as that provided by clinical supervision and just seen in the present slice of events in the professional lives of two individuals, might then be found. It is from this perspective, one that depicts teachers as collaborating with each other in an ongoing process and often turning to peers for collegial support, guidance and occasionally truth, that the present case study of clinical supervision is to be viewed.

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